DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 768 CS 502 157

AUTHOR Harris, Linda
TITLE The Effects of Interaction Management and Background Similarity on Perceived Communication Competence and Attraction during Initial Interaction.
PUB DATE Apr 78
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (Chicago, Illinois, April 25-29, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavioral Science Research; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Skills; Friendship; *Interaction; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Intercommunication; Interpersonal Competence; *Interpersonal Relationship

ABSTRACT

Although most information exchanged in an initial interaction is superficial, relationships often develop or terminate depending on the evaluations made during the first three to four minutes of a conversation. In order to investigate the content and process levels of the information exchanged during the initial interactions, 90 subjects watched short video-taped conversations between two men. The subjects were asked to assume that interactant A was a local acquaintance of theirs, while interactant B was a stranger. They were to evaluate B's interaction management from the point of view of a local citizen. Two independent variables, background similarity and interaction management, were manipulated. Results of the test indicated that subjects tended to perceive an interactant as more competent and attractive when that person manages an equitable share of the conversation. Perceived similarity had no significant effect on the evaluations except in statistical interaction with the interaction management variable. It was concluded that those who know the rules and manage an equal share of the conversation are those with whom one chooses to continue the conversation, and perhaps an ongoing relationship. (Author/JF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED155768

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTION MANAGEMENT AND BACKGROUND SIMILARITY ON PERCEIVED COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AND ATTRACTION DURING INITIAL INTERACTION

Linda Harris
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Linda Harris

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Presented at the International Communication Association
Convention Chicago, Illinois, April, 1978

CS502157

The first few minutes of the first conversation between persons function as a testing ground for the future, if any, of the relationship between them. In a real sense, the existence and shape of all other conversational variables -- self-disclosure, validation, interpersonal influence, relational development -- is subsequent to and depends upon the way these few minutes are handled.

There is little question about what usually happens during initial interaction: it lasts up to five minutes, and the persons talk about relatively uninvolving topics including an exchange of "public" demographic information about themselves. These patterns are so repetitious as to be ritualistic (Knapp and Krivonos, 1975) and to bore coders (Berger, 1973). The function of initial interaction is similarily uncontroversial: persons use it to decide whether to continue the conversation and, if so, how it should develop. This decision is generally explained using some form of reinforcement or equity theory: based on what happens during initial interaction, the person makes an assessment of the probably nature of subsequent conversations and seeks or avoids them.

The outstanding question is this: what aspects of intial interaction affect the decision about the desirability of continued conversation? Two explanations of communicators' evaluative responses have been offered, one focusing on the content of the information exchanged and the other on the perception of the other as a competent communicator. There is little empirical reason to choose between these explanations. At present, preference reflects analysts' assumptions about the nature of communication rather than the results of research. Precisely because initial interactions have been so well described and exhibit strong regularities, they provide an opportunity to contrast the content-focused and relationship-focused conceptualizations of communication. The bulk of the research on interpersonal evaluation has focused on perceptions of attraction. Attraction has been approached from several perspectives: similarity (Bryne, 1969), uncertainty reduction (Berger and Calabrese, 1975), equity theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973; Homans, 1961), and

the diffusion of innovations (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). The literature on similarity, uncertainty reduction, equity and diffusion concerns itself with the criteria people use in judging personality attributes and background information. The explanations range from reinforcement to communication apprehension to uncertainty reduction. The conclusion exemplified by the studies conducted by Byrne and his students (1971, 1962) is that people will judge more favorably those they perceive as similar to them than those they perceive as dissimilar. It must be remembered, however, that none of the above research investigated the manner, style, or skill with which people manage their conversations.

Without deprecating the information-exchange function of communication, others have stressed the importance of another level of interaction. On of Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson's (1968) axioms stipulated that communication proceeds at two levels simultaneously, in which the "relational" level involves meanings about identities and roles. Millar and Rogers (1976) and others have developed coding schemes and some hypotheses about the functioning of relational communication. Searle's (1969) analysis of "speech acts" is comparable: the significance of a statement in the particular context in which it is uttered may bear little resemblance to its literal context and may be described using a vocabulary of actional terms such as "insults", "praises", etc.

The conceptualization of the relational level of communication suggests that the skilled performance -- in addition to the content of that which is performed -- of initial interaction may be the basis for decisions about subsequent conversation. Specifically, the rules of duration and content may simply provide an arena within which potential conversants size each other up as skilled performers.

Communication Competence

This interpretation is consistent with the perspective of a group of researchers who have stressed communicator competence. The body of literature on communication

competence introduces a criterion for evaluating the relational level of communication. So far, it is the only paradigm which addresses itself to the effects of the process of communication on the evaluation of the communicator. Inherent in the concept of competence is the provision for judging the skill with which an individual communicates.

In developing a model of communication competence Weimann provides a very useful review of communication competence literature which he divides into three main schools of thought: (1) the human relations or T-group approach; (2) the social skill approach; and (3) the self-presentation approach (Weimann, 1977).

In a review of the T-group approach, Bochner and Kelly (1974) propose three criteria against which communication competence can be judged: "(a) ability to formulate and achieve objectives; (b) ability to collaborate effectively with others, i.e., to be interdependent; and (c) ability to adapt appropriately to situational or environmental variations."

As a representative of the social skills approach, Argyle (1969, 1972) proposes seven dimensions of communication competence: (a) extroversion and affiliation; (b) dominance-submission; (c) poise-social anxiety; (d) rewardingness; (e) interaction skills; (f) perceptual sensitivity; and (g) role-taking ability.

Goffman (1959) originated the concept "presentation of self" to explain man's role playing activities. The competent communicator, in this sense, is the one who (a) presents appropriate faces which his fellow participants can support without jeopardizing their own, and who (b) supports the faces presented to him by others.

Weimann (1977) suggests that all three approaches to competence characterize communication in terms of "effectiveness". While all the above elements may be necessary in order to be an effective communicator, Weimann's data supported the centrality of interaction management which he defined as behavior; "concerned with the 'procedural' aspects that structure and maintain an interaction. These include initiation and termination of encounters, the allocation of speaking turns, and

control of topics discussed" (pp. 9-10). He found that even small changes in management behavior resulted in large variations in competence scores. Weimann predicted that a curvilinear relationship would occur between the performance and judgments of communication competence; he hypothesized that a moderate amount of any given management behavior is more highly valued by interactants than either high or low extreme amounts. This hypothesis was not supported.

A crucial inconsistency in Weimann's research may explain his failure to support a curvilinear hypothesis. He operationalized interaction management by manipulating turn-taking and topic control. But in creating his stimulus material he varied the number of interruptions, pauses (of 3 seconds or longer), and turns of topic control for each conversation. It appears as if he has not taken into consideration the full thrust behind turn-taking.

There may exist within the initial interaction ritual rules which govern coordinated timing of conversations. It does not follow, however, that it is the compliance to these rules which contribute to social stability. Turn-taking will be more usefully defined to include a more powerful norm of reciprocity. With little concern for overstatement, Gouldner (1960) suggests that the norm of reciprocity is "no less universal and important an element of culture than the incest taboo, although, similarly, its concrete formulations may vary from time to place" (p. 171). In his classic discussion of reciprocity, Gouldner further states that the rule of mutual give and take may best be understood as a moral norm which defines certain actions and obligations as repayment for benefits received.

If, as Gouldner implies, the norm of reciprocity is deeply embedded in all societies it will be felt in the rules for coordinating conversations. Communication research supports this notion. Berger and Calabrese (1975) have noted the centrality of reciprocity in communication. They argue that since uncertainty is high during initial interaction, reciprocity is established to insure a smooth flow of information from each communication partner. Jourard (1959) coined the term "dyadic effect"

to describe the phenomenon of reciprocal self-disclosure. His data reveal that as one individual increases the intimacy of his information so does his partner. Altman and Taylor (1973) propose a theory integrating Jourard's "dyadic effect" and the norm of reciprocity. They conclude that at shallow stages of involvement, social norms play a primary role in disclosure and therefore reciprocity will be high among strangers.

It may be argued, based on the apparent social pressure to adhere to reciprocal exchange of information, that reciprocity will be more closely monitored and critically evaluated by communicators during initial interaction that will be the number of interruptions and pauses. If interaction management is reconceptualized to include reciprocity as well as topic control, it may well prove to be a good predictor of the curvilinear relationship between interaction management and perceived competence hypothesized by Weimann.

It follows also that the social pressure felt by a communicator to reciprocate and his use of the norm of reciprocity to manage a conversation will play an important role in effective conversation management. Assume that there exists a set of rules regulating particular turn-taking behaviors. One form of competence consists of knowing and following these rules. However, in the give and take of conversation, it is necessary for persons to utilize the rules skillfully so as to achieve ulterior objectives, such as reciprocity. The difference is that between a football quarterback who recognizes and exploits an opportunity and one who creates the situation in which the opportunity would exist; or between a conversant who knows how to take a turn-yielding cue and one who knows how to get the other to offer him one. These differentiations lead to an extention of the concept of communicator competence.

It will be remembered that a competent communicator has been characterized as one who is "effective" in his conversations with others. This notion of effectiveness is vacuous unless we account for an individual's ability to assess a given situation and exhibit the behavior appropriate to that situation. Thayer (1968) clarifies the

issue by suggesting two types of communication competence -- strategic and tactical:

> Strategic competence in communication refers to an individual's ability veridically (accurately) to perceive or intuit or comprehend the state-relationship between himself and some aspect of his environment (e.g., between himself and the other(s) whom he wishes to communicate-to, or by whom he wishes to be communicated-with). Tactical competence is the sum of an individual's skills and abilities to communicate-to and be-communicated-with by others (p. 131).

Thayer does not discuss situational competency specifically. Strategic competence can, however, easily be extended to include assessment of an individual's ability to accurately comprehend his situational environment as well as his communication partner within that environment. With this addition to the competence model, researchers can evaluate communicators on four general criteria (two strategic and two tactical): (a) his ability to accurately assess his relationship with his communication partner; (b) his ability to accurately assess the episode being enacted; (c) his ability to communicate-with and be communicated-to across communication partners; (d) his ability to communicate-with and to his communication partners across communication situations. This category system will serve to locate the focus of the following study within the larger competence framework. First, the effect of a communicator's ability to accurately assess his relationship on his partner's evaluation of him was measured. A second purpose was to explore the particular skills necessary for a communicator to communicate-with and to his partner within a particular situation.

Hypotheses

The literature suggests that two dependent variables were appropriate for study: perceptions of attraction and communication competence. Each reflects subject's judgment of participants with varying background similarity and interaction management.

A wealth of data suggested that perceived similarity would facilitate a positive evaluation. This issue was raised once again here. Two hypotheses focused on

perceived similarity and perceived dissimilarity and their effects on the perceptions of attraction and competence.

Following Weimann, a prediction concerning the effect of interaction management on perceptions of competence was made. It was anticipated that a communicator who facilitates symmetrical interaction management would be perceived as more competent than one who undermanages or overmanages a conversation. In addition, an hypothesis predicting the same curvilinear effect of interaction management continuum, would preduce more favorable effects on attraction than either of the two poles of the continuum (low and high management).

PROCEDURE

This study contrasts the relative significance of the content and relational levels of initial interactions as the basis for further conversations. Specifically, the content level denotes demographic information exchanged which, based on previous research, structured high and low similarity conditions. The relational level was operationalized as three levels of interaction management, high, symmetrical and low. Realizing that the specific context used in the study might provide a justification for various styles of interaction management, perceived "disposition" of the subject was controlled statistically. The effect of similarity and interaction management in initial interaction was determined by measuring interpersonal attraction and perceived competence.

An explication of the methodological procedure will be presented in four sections: Instructions to Subjects; Experimental Stimuli; Dependent Variables and Covariate; and Pretests.

Instructions to Subjects

The experiment was conducted in two university undergraduate communication classes. The subjects (90 students; 56 males and 34 females) were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions. Each group of fifteen subjects was assigned

to an experimental laboratory at a different time during the day. Questionnaires were distributed to all class members. The general instructions indicated that they would be watching a short video-taped conversation between two men. Their task was to assume they were members of the local community of Pointsville, Indiana, and that one of the men (interactant A) was a local acquaintance of theirs, while the other man, (interactant B) was a stranger. They were to imagine themselves waiting in the doctor's office, overhearing a conversation between the local man and the stranger. Subjects were asked to evaluate B's interaction management from the point of view of a local citizen of Pointsville (the one with similar background as A). In order to disguise the real purpose of the study and to encourage maximum effort in the role-taking task, subjects were told that the experiment was designed to measure their role-taking ability.

Experimental Stimuli

The two independent variables, background similarity and interaction management, were manipulated.

Manipulation of background similarity. The initial conversations between these two strangers were manipulated by varying background similarity and interaction management. Background similarity was varied by providing similar or dissimilar information concerning residence, age, occupation, religion, place of birth, family profile, and education, relative to both in two ways: (1) through initial instructions to subjects; (2) by including the above demographic information during the interview session with the receptionist which preceded each initial interaction. Subjects were instructed to play the role of a local citizen with similar background to one of the men involved in a conversation they overheard in a doctor's waiting room. They were also to assume equivalent age (25) and education (high school) as the local interactant. The interview session between the doctor's receptionist and each interactant served as a reminder to the subjects of the similarity or dissimilarity in background of each. During each interview the "patient" was asked the

demographic information listed above.

Manipulation of interaction management. Interaction management was operationalized to include two types of management opportunities -- topic control and reciprocity. Topic control consisted of the opportunities each individual had to change the topic of conversation at any given time during the interaction. Reciprocity consisted of the opportunities each individual was given to respond "as expected" in extending the topic of conversation at hand.

The topics for conversation were varied as little as possible among three dialogues. Turn-yielding cues (invitations to take a speaking turn) were placed throughout the scripts. The placements of the cues were derived from analyzing natural conversations. Each cue provided an opportunity for either interactant to manage the conversation by initiating a new topic or reciprocating on a current one. Interaction management was varied across three conditions: high interaction management (HIM), symmetrical interaction management (SIM), and low interaction management (LIM). The manipulation was based on the assumption that equal (symmetrical) management would be ideal during a first encounter. Thus, symmetrical management reflects total reciprocity of topic control and topic extension where each interactant shares equally in choosing topics and continuing discussion of the topic on the agenda. HIM represents overmanagement or conversation dominance on the part of one interactant. He does not allow his partner equal share of turns at choosing and/or extending topics for discussion. LIM represents undermanagement or conversation reticence on the part of one interactant. He does not take his equal share of turns for choosing and/or extending the topics.

Dependent Variables and Covariate

After viewing the tape all subjects were asked to respond to the Weimann Communication Competence Scale and the McCroskey Attraction and Sociability Scales. On each measure subjects marked the space which best represented their position on seven point semantic differential scales.

Communication competence. The interaction management subscale of Weimann's Communication Competence Scale (Weimann, 1977) was used to measure perceived competence of interactant B. The reliability of the instrument was estimated at .96 using Cronback's alpha.

Attraction. The McCroskey Attraction Scale (McCroskey, McCain, 1972) was used to measure subjects' desire to get to know, work with, be like, etc., interactant B.

Covariate. Disposition was characterized as an aspect of an individual's personality which may vary according to environmental conditions. As interaction management was manipulated from high to low, it was felt that subjects might interpret unusual management as caused by variation in mood. This position is supported by the results of the McCroskey et al. study in which tension, orientation, verbosity, etc., affected perceived attraction and competence (1974).

Subjects were asked to indicate their impressions of interactant B by marking the appropriate spaces along four seven-place semantic differential scales. The scales employed were: cheerful-gloomy, good-natured-irritable, sociable-unsociable, good mood-bad mood (McCroskey, Hamilton and Weiner, 1974).

Pretests

Four pretests were conducted. Results of those tests reveal: (a) interaction management was reliably manipulated; (b) actual similarity of background did not have a significant effect on the dependent measures; (c) sex differences between males and females did not have major effects on the dependent measures; (d) dependent measures of attraction and competence are not significantly correlated.

RESULTS

The results of the experiment will be discussed according to each hypothesis pertaining to the effects of the covariate variable (disposition) and independent variables (similarity and interaction management) upon each of the two dependent variables (competence and attraction). An F Max Test was computed for homogeneity

of the variance for both the dependent variables. Non-significant results legitimated the use of a parametric statistical test. A 2x3 Analysis of Covariance design with one covariate was used in the main experiment (see Tables 1 and 2).

Tables 1 and 2 About Here

Competence

Hy_1 The greater the similarity of demographic information perceived by interactant during initial interaction, the greater the observer's perception of that interactant's communication competency.

The disposition covariate was significant (F = 70.30, df = 1/83, $p.<.001$ -- Table 1). It accounted for 67% of the variance. The Analysis of Covariance revealed a significant main effect for the independent variable of similarity on competence (F = 7.77, df = 1/83, $p.<.01$). The direction of the effect was the opposite to that which was hypothesized (see Table 2). Hypothesis one was therefore rejected: greater perceived background information similarity was not positively related to greater perceived competence (see Table 2 where the higher the scale score, the lower the perceived competence).

Hy_2 The level of interaction management displayed by an actor during initial interaction is curvilinearly related to observer's perception of that interactant's communication competency. Symmetrical interaction management will result in a higher rating of competency than will either low or high interaction management.

The main effect for interaction management on competence was significant (F = 68.06, df = 2/83, $p.<.001$) and supported research hypothesis two. The level of interaction management displayed during initial interaction was significantly related to observers' perceptions of that interactant's communication competency. Symmetrical interaction management resulted in a higher rating of competence than did either high or low interaction management (see Table 2). There was a significant statistical interaction effect (F = 3.52, df = 2/83, $p.<.05$), although one was

not predicted.

A Newman Keuls' test was chosen for a posteriori comparisons among measures. All comparisons were made on adjusted means.

In both the HIM and SIM conditions there were no significant differences in perceived competence between the similarity and dissimilarity conditions (see Figure 1). Similarity did make a significant difference in the LIM condition; subjects perceived dissimilar interactants as more competent than similar interactants.

An Omega Squared Test was computed to assess the amount of variance accounted for by the experimental manipulation. Results indicated that simularity accounted for 2% of the variance. The statistical interaction between similarity and interaction management accounted for 1% of the variance. The total competence variance accounted for was 46%. Results of the Omega Squared Test indicated that interaction management accounted for 43% of the variance.

Figure 1 About Here

Attraction

Tables 3 and 4 About Here

Hy_3 The greater the similarity of demographic information perceived by interactant during initial interaction, the greater the observer's attraction to that interactant.

The disposition covariate was significant ($F = 34.1$, $df = 1/83$, $p. < .001$ -- Table 3). It accounted for 47% of the variance in attraction. No significant main effect was found for the independent variable of similarity on attraction ($F = 0.014$, $df = 1/83$, $p. = ns$). Thus the results fail to support the research hypothesis.

Hy_4 The level of interaction management displayed by an actor during initial interaction is curvilinearly related to observer's attraction to the interactant. Symmetrical interaction management will result in a higher rating of attraction than will either low or high interaction management.

The main effect for interaction management on attraction was significant ($F = 16.87$, $df = 2/83$, $p.<.001$), supporting research hypothesis four. Symmetrical interaction management resulted in a higher rating of attraction than did either low or high interaction management (see Table 4 where high scores reflect low perceived attraction).

There was a significant unhypothesized interaction effect ($F = 3.17$, $df = 2/83$, $p.<.05$). A shift in the direction of similarity effect occurring in the SIM condition produced an unanticipated cell difference. Dissimilarity produced lower attraction scores in the HIM and LIM conditions. Dissimilarity produced higher scores in the SIM condition (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 About Here

Results of the W^2 test revealed the following: similarity accounted for 0.6% of the variance; interaction management accounted for 24% of the variance; statistical interaction effect accounted for 2% of the variance; the total variance accounted for was 27%.

A post hoc power analysis of the nonsignificant main effect of similarity on attraction was conducted. With 45 subjects in each condition and an effect of 2% of the variance, the power value was less than 0.07.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

The results of the present study have contributed significant extensions and revisions of the evaluation models mentioned earlier. A discussion of these contributions follows, beginning with the useful content/relationship level of communication.

Two of the tests support the premise that the content and relationship levels

communication can be usefully analyzed separately. Apparently people can and do differentiate between how attractive a person is and how competent he is as a communicator. There was no significant correlation between these two dependent measures. Also, background similarity, which has been considered to be a most important variable in determining attraction, did not have a significant effect on attraction in this study. In fact it had the opposite effect in predicting competence; the dissimilar condition was significantly different from the similar condition. This suggests that there are other intervening variables which must be considered in explaining an initial interaction. Interaction management on the other hand accounted for a substantial amount of the variance and affected subjects' perceptions of competence and attraction drastically. By manipulating the similarity and management variables and comparing their effects upon perceived attraction and competence a new basis for decisions about subsequent interactions may be advanced: the skill with which an individual establishes and maintains an appropriate relationship with another will be a more reliable predictor of his success at further development of the relationship than that of background similarity.

Several of the relevant communication models may be usefully extended to include the effects of a person's management style on his evaluation by communication partners. First, interaction management can be incorporated within the attribution model. Communication style can now be included as a variable which serves as a criterion for attributing certain attitudes to another during initial interaction. Apparently people attribute variety in interaction management to the interactant's disposition or mood as well as to his communication competence. Further research on style and attributions should help clarify the importance of interaction management on reducing the uncertainty of both interactants during an initial conversation.

Secondly, interaction management must then be included as an important aspect of equity research especially in studies concerning initial interaction. This

study reveals that equal participation in initial conversation may be perceived as more rewarding than either undermanagement or overmanagement. Apparently the norm of reciprocity is crucial to the continuance of a conversation between two strangers. Perhaps, all other things being equal, the burden of carrying more than an equal share of the management responsibility is considered to be too costly to continue. Also, the lack of an equal opportunity to initiate and extend topics may be a cost too great to warrant a further conversation. The interactants who can share equally begin to realize that if they don't get their turn this time, shortly they will be given a turn.

Optimal homophily is some combination of homophily and heterophily according to the work conducted by McCroskey, et al. (1975). Although the present study does not address this issue directly, the results do raise an interesting question; is there a point at which a person may be perceived as too competent at conversation management to be considered homophilous? Further diffusion research in both interpersonal and mass communication must deal with the management variable and its effects on the diffusion of new information.

Communication competence should prove to be an important aspect to the study of interpersonal relationships. Two areas of future research on interaction management will extend the work on competence: (1) More extensive research needs to be conducted to isolate the effects of specific constituents of management competence and to assess their effects in various situations. Particularly the effects of topic control and reciprocity could be independently studied. (2) The nature of statistical interactive effects on communication competence suggests the need to study how people explain difficulties in doing conversation. A specific hypothesis suggested is that background dissimilarities are used to rationalize poor management.

Another issue raised here is the relationship between tactical (effective) communication competence and strategic (accurate) communication competence. An individual cannot be accurate in his perceptions of his social environment unless he

is tactically competent. Just as vital, one must be accurate in his assessment of any given situational rules before he can make good choices about how or whether to follow those rules. There is real promise in oncorporating these concepts of tactical and strategic competence into further research involving other stages of relationship development. One interesting question raised here is "What role does tactical and strategic communication competence (including the array of skills noted earlier) play in the initiation, maintenance, and termination of on-going relationships?"

This paper has not focused on metatheoretical issues. In its development, however, a fundamental paradigmatic question could not be ignored. It becomes apparent that a model of communication competence, as well as its ajoining methodological procedures, must account for intentionality, violition, and the ability to critique, on the part of a communicator. The resulting question is this: Can communication competence be adequately explained within the dominant covering law paradigm or would its investigation best be conducted under an action theory (Cushman and Whiting, 1972) or rules-based explanatory mode (Harre and Secord, 1973)? Certainly future work in this area must address itself to this crucial issue.

Table 1

Analysis of Covariance for Perceived

Communication Competence of Interactant

in Initial Interaction

source of variation	sum of squares	df	mean square	f	signif of f
Covariate					
Disposition	9524.6	1	9524.6	70.3	.001
Main Effects					
Similarity	1052.5	1	1052.5	7.7	.001
Management	18443.9	2	9221.9	68.	.001
2-Way Interactions					
Sim Manage	954.	2	477.	3.5	.033
Residual	11245.4	83	135.5		
Total	41203.2	89	462.9		

Table 2

Adjusted Mean Scores of Perceived Competence of Interactant in Initial Interaction*

Background Similarity	Interaction Management			
	high	symmetrical	low	$\bar{x}$
Similar	84.46[a]	41.37[b]	78.76[c]	68.20
Dissimilar	78.66[d]	40.86[e]	62.22[f]	60.58
$\bar{x}$	31.60	41.11	70.49	

Note. The lower the scores the higher the perceived competence.

*Results of Newman-Keuls' test at $p < .05$:

a>e, b, f

b<f, d, c

c>e, f

d>e, f

e<f

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance for Perceived

Attraction of Interactant in Initial Interaction

source of variation	sum of squares	df	mean square	f	signif of f
Covariate					
Disposition	2317.7	1	2317.7	24.1	.001
Main Effects					
Similarity	1.3	1	1.3	0.01	.999
Management	3237.7	2	1618.8	16.87	.001
2-Way Interactions					
Sim Manage	608.5	2	304.2	3.17	.046
Residual	7963.424	83	95.945		
Total	14128.722	89	158.75		

Table 4

Adjusted Means Scores of Perceived Attraction of Interactant in Initial Interaction*

Background Similarity	Interaction Management			
	high	symmetrical	low	$\bar{x}$
Similar	56.40[a]	36.69[b]	45.19[c]	46.09
Dissimilar	50.43[d]	41.88[e]	44.81[f]	45.71
$\bar{x}$	53.42	39.29	45.00	

Note. The lower the scores the higher the perceived attraction.

*Results of the Newman-Keul's test at $p<.05$:

a> b, e, f, c

b< d

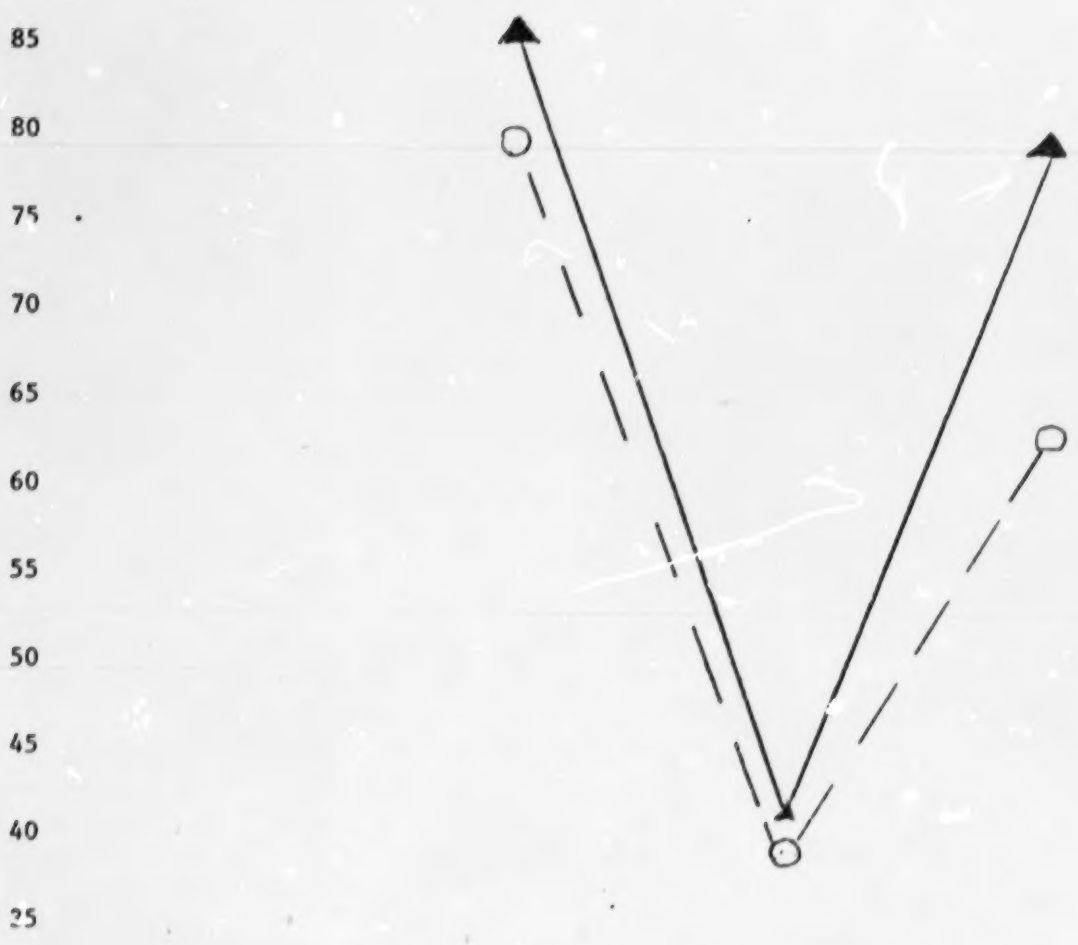

Figure 1. Statistical Interaction Effects of Interaction Management and Similarity on Perceived Competence.

Similarity =

Dissimilarity =

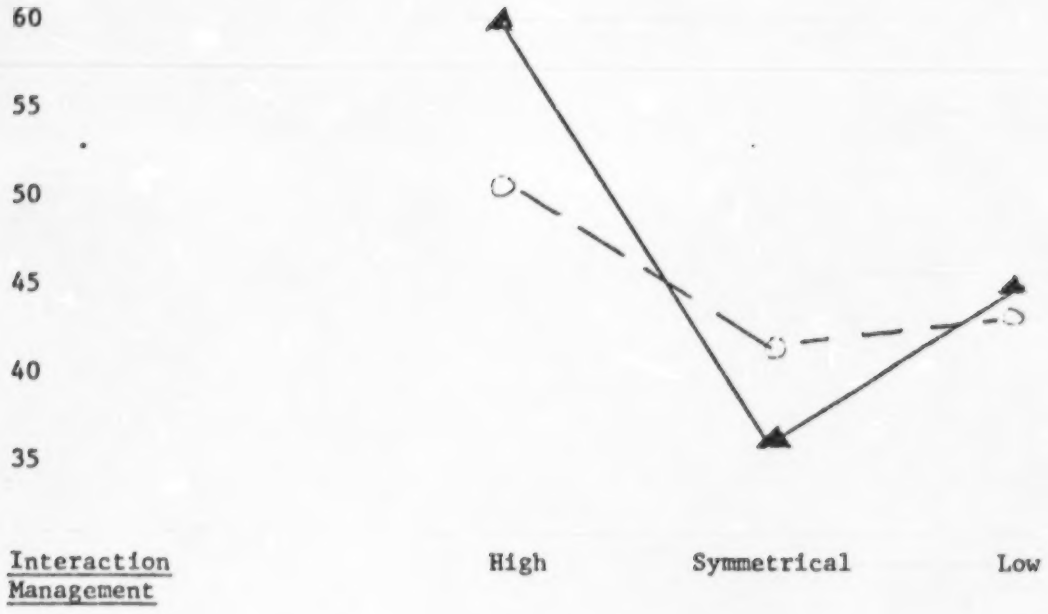

Figure 2. Statistical Interaction Effects of Interaction Management and Similarity Perceived Attraction.

Similarity = △——△

Dissimilarity = ○- - - -○

REFERENCES

Altman, I., and Taylor, D. A. Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973.

Argyle, M. Social interaction. Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1969.

Argyle, M. The psychology of interpersonal behavior (2nd ed.). Baltimore: Penguin, 1972.

Berger, C. R. The acquaintance process revisited: Explorations in initial interaction. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, New York, 1973.

Berger, C. R., and Calabrese, R. J. Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. Human Communication Research, 1975, 1, 99-112.

Bochner, A. P., and Kelly, C. W. Interpersonal competence: Rationale, philosophy, and implementation of a conceptual framework. Speech Teacher, 1974, 23, 279-301.

Byrne, D. Attitudes and attraction. In Berkowitz, L., ed. Advances in experimental social psychology, (Vol. 4) New York: Academic Press, 1969.

Byrne, D. Attraction paradigm. New York: Academic Press, 1971.

Byrne, D., and Wong, T. Racial prejucid, interpersonal attraction, and assumed dissimilarity of attitudes. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1962, 65 (4), 246-253.

Byrne, D., and Nelson, D. Attraction as a linear function of proportion of positive reinforcement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1965, 1 (6), 659-663.

Cushman, D., and Whiting, G. An approach to communication theory: Toward a consensus on rules. Journal of Communication, 1972, 22, 217-238.

Goffman, E. Presentation of self in everyday life. Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday Anchor, 1959.

Goulder, A. The norm of reciprocity: A Preliminary statement American Sociological Review, 1960, 25, 161-178.

Harre, R., and Secord, P. The explanation of social behavior. Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1973.

Homans, G. C. Social behavior: Its elementary forms. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1961.

Jourard, S. Self-disclosure and other-cathexis. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1959, 59, 428-431.

Krivinonos, P., and Knapp, M. Initiating communication: What do you say when you say hello? Central States Speech Journal, 1975, 26, (2), 115-125.

McCroskey, J., Daly, J., and Richmond, V. Measuring perceived homophily in interpersonal communication. Human Communication Research, 1975, 1 (4), 323-332.

McCroskey, J., Hamilton, P., and Weiner, A. The effect of interaction behavior on source credibility, homophily, and interpersonal attraction. Human Communication Research, 1974, 1 (1), 42-53.

Millar, F., and Rogers, E. A relational approach to interpersonal communication. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976.

Rogers, E., and Shoemaker, F. Communication of innovations. New York: Free Press, 1971.

Searle, J. Speech Acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Thayer, L. Communication and communication systems. Homewood, Illinois: Irwin, Inc., 1968.

Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., and Jackson, D. Pragmatics of human communication. New York: Norton, 1967.

Weimann, J. Explication and test of a model of communication competence. Human Communication Research, 1977, 3 (3), 195-213.